

Agenda Items

1. Greetings and Introductions (Eric)

2. Current Interest and Review of Current Coos-Curry Conservation Implementation Strategies (Pat Jones).

See summary sheet. Pat described the 3 current strategies and noted some progress items, then reviewed local uses of “National Initiatives” including drought relief (1,200 acres fuel break and livestock watering, Coos County), Seasonal High Tunnels to extend growing seasons, and 3 applications so far this year Transitioning to Organic.

3. Current NRCS Program Opportunities (David Chain)

David shared how Douglas County is using National Initiatives (Seasonal High Tunnels, Traditionally Underserved and non-traditional farmers). He mentioned how well networking through farmers’ markets has worked in Douglas County.

EQIP: Please let local NRCS staff know if there is a need for areas of future funding. Need to leverage other partners’ work and funds.

CSP: Applications through February 3. Crop, pasture, and forest owners doing good work and ready to adopt “enhancements”. Base level of payment is determined by current ongoing practices being performed by the landowner, with additional payments for signing up to do enhancements. Do not wait; lots of effort by NRCS and landowner required to establish eligibility and sign up. Applications are accepted year-round but cut-offs are announced for funding. This is a nationally available program, contrasted with the local Conservation Implementation Strategies run by the local office.

(CREP) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Barbara Grant)

Described sign-up incentive, cost-shares from state and federal, and practice incentive payment, contract length, cooperating entities, and some uses of CREP program in Coos and Curry Counties.

4. Leveraging NRCS Staff and Funding Opportunities (David Chain)

Joint Chiefs: Being used in Douglas County. Cooperative between U.S. Forest Service and NRCS, identified areas where USFS implements projects on USFS land while NRCS covers the private non-industrial forest owners. David described examples near Tiller and South Umpqua Rural County Partnership, including forest management plans.

HFRP: Working forests in non-industrial private or tribal ownership.

In the past aimed at restoring forest habitat for ESA species (Northern Spotted Owl), now only funded as part of a Regional Conservation Partnership (RCPP) proposal.

RCPP: an outside partner leads program and NRCS provides match. Examples included large oak restoration projects in Douglas.

CIG: Conservation Innovation Grants: Biochar example—demonstration project led to development of NRCS-funded practice for others to use.

Easement Programs: Easement program contact information for Suzy Liebenberg, ACEP. All easement programs are completely voluntary, and they involve partners.

1. Permanent Easements: funding for 100% of the purchase cost of easement and 50-75% of restoration costs.
2. 30-Year Easements: Funding for 50-75% of the purchase cost of the easement and 50-75% of restoration costs.

Agricultural Lands Easements (ALE) limits non-agricultural uses and conversions from agriculture to development while protecting natural resources benefits.

Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) wetlands restoration.

## 5. Round Table Discussion

Attending agencies and producers: What are you working on? How can NRCS leverage your work? Have you noticed resource concerns that NRCS could be addressing?

ODF (Kelly Foster): Coordinating ODF efforts with NRCS. Finishing up the Tiller project described earlier. ODF-NRCS partnership means NRCS can reimburse ODF for producing Forest Management Plans statewide to support projects. 10 acre plus non-industrial forest owners. Eric mentioned that NRCS is working toward a CIS in the Sixes sub-basin and hopes that ODF will write stewardship plans.

Private landowner (Betty Crockett): NRCS should be addressing SOD stewardship, especially what is safe to plant once an acreage has been stripped to control SOD. Pat mentioned that NRCS typically can't work on prevention, but might be able to help with clean up and restoring forest cover with appropriate species.

OSU Extension—Forestry (Norma Kline): SOD is a priority in her new position. Trials are being conducted and funding is being sought for a new workshop and informational booklet. Implications of the new strain (called EU strain) with its ability to mutate and potential to infect conifers discussed.

Norma notes gorse is a serious resource concern that people have not had the funding to deal with adequately, and that she is currently working on disseminating root-rot resistant Port Orford Cedar.

FSA (Bret Harris): Emergency Forest Restoration Program is newly available. Currently focused on drought damage but may be adapted to address SOD damage and restoration.

WRCA (Jim Seeley): SOD is under-appreciated and has the potential also to destroy the nursery industry. State Representative David Brock Smith is heading up a SOD task force.

Jim also noted that WRCA has been tackling the gorse issue, reaching out to Oregon Solutions designated by Governor. Also, the Gorse Action Group needs an NRCS representative, and someone to replace Alexis Brickner as the coordinator. WRCA has funding for coordinator time.

Coos Watershed Association (Greg Stone, also a private landowner): Gorse, brooms as noxious species impacting forest productivity, etc.

Coos SWCD (Caley Sowers): Small Grant program biennium is coming to a close in June with about \$100,000 left to cover <\$10,000 per project. Riparian fence, plant, off-stream watering are typical projects.

Caley described the Coos SWCD's Focus Area on the lower NF of the Coquille. She's working toward using Powers HS Native Plant nursery for restoration projects. Doing monitoring of cold water refugia areas on the Coquille; has planned a May 10-12 2017 3-day course for grazing on sensitive lands. Submitted 2 regular OWEB grants for the Fall round of applications. Other issues that need help: Knotweed.

TNC (Steve Denney): Tidegates! Winter Lake project example of a very large cooperative effort including a tidegate. This is a "storm gathering speed" with huge impacts on Coho recovery and other species as well as preserving agriculture in affected areas.

Steve asked Heather if she has any news about NRCS's ability/willingness to work on tidegate issue, explaining that Coquille Watershed Association completed their tidegate inventory and a huge percentage of the gates on the Coquille are failing and in need of repair or upgrade. This is a major agriculture issue in Oregon, Washington, and beyond.

Heather responded that she had participated in a statewide meeting series with one meeting left. One discussion item was a proposal that OWEB may be able to pay for "large" tidegates while NRCS pays for "small" tidegates on private lands. Partnership will be key. If a partner and a DC were to create a CIS with tidegates AND management practices (not just tidegates), WRE and EQIP can be tied into the CIS process.

WRCA (Jim Seeley): OptiPass (migratory fish passage optimization tool) study by TNC to evaluate cost vs ecological uplift for tidegates in the Coquille with follow-up expected coast wide. WRCA is strongly behind the effort to prioritize tidegates based on ecological return.

Coos Watershed Association (Elizabeth Galli-Noble): Inquired why the CISs were capped at 3, and how much money is available for each. Heather: Cap is due to limited staff, with 2 local staff 3 is enough. Doesn't have the exact numbers but expecting cuts to farm bill in future. Also RCPP interest: Last round will be announced soon for State and National pools.

Beaver Slough Drainage District (Fred Messerle, also private landowner): Update on Winter Lake/China Creek project (tidegates, channel restoration, wetland restoration, grazing lands). All permits are done after an 18 month process. Issuing a Notice of Intent to Award a contract with bids due tomorrow. Contract should be in place by end of month with implementation starting this summer. NOAA's Coast Coho recovery plan called out the Coquille Working Landscape plan as an example of the kind of recovery work much needed in the population area. CWL Website has links to its Water Management Plan and Fish Passage Plan that provide important information about the process. Total acreage: 1,700 grazing, wetland. Coho have access to entire project during the winter high water. We will be growing fish in the winter, and beef in the summer.

ODFW (Chris Claire): Has been busy with Winter Lake project as well. NMFS may have \$4-7 million available for tidegate grants for inventory/prioritizations. Tidegates are an urgent issue, enabling us to accommodate agriculture (“just restoration” means removing tidegates entirely). Fish passage drives size and expense, etc. Regulatory agencies also dislike the prolonged time the permitting process takes. Group discussion about the need or feasibility of a plug-and-play tidegate approach. Hydrology is very site-specific—drain time, velocity, etc.

Fish Biologist Chris said he couldn’t entirely cover wildlife issues, but elk and deer habitat/food is of interest in forest improvement (diversity discussed). Bear peeling season is coming.

Plant Materials Center (Annie Young-Matthews): PMS is working on cover crops, mostly for the Willamette Valley but with applications for the coast, Pollinator enhancements (working with Pat Jones to develop planting lists for cranberry producers), TE species recovery (butterflies). David Chain asked about monarch habitat information, since there is a lot of interest in Douglas Co.

USFWS Coast Program (Madeleine Vander Heyden): Discussed monarch butterfly migrations, possible use of riparian corridors through canyons, milkweed planting options. Xerces Society also has a lot of good information online.

Also has monarch information and partnership opportunities. Working on a SW Oregon Rogue Valley as a hotspot for monarchs. Agness area discussed. Also other areas around Oregon. Incorporating pollinators in Forest Management Plans is highly desirable. Petition filed for Monarch ESA listing, USFWS wants to work with partners to avoid need to list. Monarch use the Rogue, the Chetco, and have been sighted in Bandon. Six miles up the Rogue is the closest *documented* milkweed.

Also, Coast Program is getting more into acquisitions and easements, so needs information on ALE, WRE, etc. for partnership opportunities. Heather says that ALE needs matching funds since NRCS typically covers 50%.

USFS (Michael Crotteau): Acting Powers District Ranger until mid-March. Gold Beach area working on assessment of Shasta-Agness forest with Wild Rivers Coast Forest Collaborative east of Agness. Oak restoration, recreational forest. The next work will be on the Chetco and Winchuck “The Chet-Chuck” broad restoration planning. Powers area, Scoping watershed-scale restoration in the Elk basin due to high interest in restoration with recent Strategic Action Plan process over past year. Gordie Reeves and others to present at Port Orford City Hall about ecosystem services, and climate change effects on restoration planning. Considering a day-long program to present history and past restoration efforts on the Elk.

OSU Extension—Agriculture (Cassie Bouska): Scale insect infestation (example, Armored Scale aka “Green scale” is a ubiquitous pest that is new to our local cranberry growers. Can kill areas of bed, no crop losses yet. Difficult to destroy without harming pollinators. Treatment options, timing implications are being studied at Integrated Pest Protection Center for cherry, potato, and cranberry crops. Potential to develop a strategic plan in Oregon and possibly Washington.

Powers HS Native Seedling nursery and Forest Program (Kay Clayburn): Growing seedlings. Needs partners that need trees and student science/labor. They have reduced activity in the past 4 years but are ready to re-vamp and have all infrastructure in place. This is an important school retention and career education program, paying students \$7.90 per hour but requires attendance and grades.

Working on a project to connect Coquille Watershed Association with all 5 school districts. (Jim Seeley said WRCA very supportive of GoNative! at Bandon HS, which was inspired by the Powers program, and that he is very interested in hearing more about the broader county-wide school district effort.)

DEQ Regional Solutions (Kate Jackson): Very interested in learning more about partnership efforts on the south coast as part of larger effort to marry discrete Watershed Council activities for conservation progress.

Bandon HS Go Native! Program (Darcy Grahek): Brought inventory sheets, has trees for projects.

Concluded meeting at about 3:50, followed by 20 minutes of informal networking and conversations.